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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 000228

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [KCRM](#) [SN](#)

SUBJECT: DPM WONG ON CASINO REGULATION AND THE TERRORIST  
THREAT IN SINGAPORE

Classified By: A/DCM Laurent Charbonnet, Reasons 1.4(b)(d)

11. (C) Summary: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs (MHA) Wong Kan Seng and the Ambassador discussed our extensive intelligence and law enforcement cooperation and ways to improve them during a January 24 courtesy call. Turning to casino regulation, Minister Wong said Singapore had taken the best ideas from other jurisdictions, such as Las Vegas, to craft its casino regulation bill, which he will be explaining to Parliament in February. Noting that Singapore and the United States shared a common concern over terrorism, Minister Wong said he was apprehensive that a terrorist bombing could seriously harm race relations in Singapore. End Summary.

12. (U) On January 24, the Ambassador called on Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs (MHA) Wong Kan Seng. ICE Attache and poloff (notetaker) also attended the meeting.

#### Bilateral Cooperation

13. (SBU) The Ambassador opened the meeting by thanking Minister Wong for the extensive intelligence and law enforcement cooperation between the United States and Singapore and the efforts of the Ministry of Home Affairs to protect the U.S. Embassy, its personnel, and other U.S. citizens in Singapore. She noted that both sides benefited from our wide-ranging work on counterterrorism and counterproliferation. We sought to enhance this relationship with a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) and more sharing of financial information. Wong agreed on the importance of concluding an MLAT and added that he did not want GOS law enforcement agencies to use the absence of an MLAT to stall cooperation.

14. (SBU) Wong said MHA was busy preparing for the World Bank/IMF meetings Singapore would host in September. MHA had been studying how the police forces in New York City and Hong Kong handled security for major national and international conferences. The GOS was adopting best practices on dealing with protesters and terrorist threats.

#### Casino Regulation

15. (SBU) With Singapore's decision to license two casinos, it would face a variety of issues on casino regulation that would be MHA's responsibility, the Ambassador observed. Wong said Singapore would be starting from scratch on casino regulation. He had visited Australia and Las Vegas and MHA officials had also been to Atlantic City to meet with casino operators and regulators. They were taking the best ideas from these jurisdictions to craft Singapore's Casino Control Bill, which Wong will explain to Parliament on February 13 and take questions from MPs. Singapore hoped to replicate some of Las Vegas' success in generating significant non-gaming revenue at the casinos, but on a smaller scale. He added that he visited Macao last June and "didn't want Singapore to be like Macao."

16. (SBU) ICE Attache stressed the importance of currency reporting requirements to be able to track money coming into Singapore. Wong said they would need to be able to check where money was coming and going.

17. (SBU) The Ambassador observed that casinos did lead to social problems, such as addicted gamblers. Wong said the GOS was also concerned about "pathological gamblers" and would take steps to minimize the problem. He added that they were also concerned about loan sharks. The GOS was stepping up its efforts to prosecute loan sharks and clean up the problem before the casinos commenced operations. He said the powerful Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions) Act, with its provisions for arrest and detention without a warrant or judicial review, was an important deterrent to foreign criminal gangs attempting to operate in Singapore.

#### Terrorism and Race Relations

18. (C) Wong commented that, as multi-racial and multi-cultural societies, Singapore and the United States faced many common problems, such as how to deal with immigration (legal and illegal) and the terrorist threat.

Wong was concerned that if there was a terrorist bombing in Singapore, it could unravel much of the government's work over the last 40 years to maintain racial relations on an "even keel." Noting the 1964 race riots between ethnic Chinese and Malays in Singapore, Wong said the GOS could not allow race or religion to be "used for politicking." At the same time, it was not possible to keep Singaporean society closed off from outside influences, given the ease of travel and internet communication. The GOS would continue to work with Singapore's different racial communities to resolve problems and avoid agitation.

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